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University of Pennsylvania.

A Dissertation on
Measles;
for the degree of
Doctor of Medicine.
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An Inaugural Dissertation &c.

There is no subject which more perplexes the medical student at the closing period of his studies than the choice of a proper topic for his inaugural thesis. Feeling a laudable wish to enter on the business of his profession with respectability, if not with some degree of reputation, he is anxious to introduce into his inaugural essay something, the novelty of which may prove, an active and original intellect. He is averse to travelling the same dull road of common observation and detail which has been trod by thousands before him, without pointing out some objects of interest and importance unnoticed by his predecessors. He would enliven the description of morbid symptoms with the fanciful ornaments of Rhetoric, and steal from the palace of imagination some beautiful illustrations of his subject; but the

almost

utmost simplicity of language is the best vehicle for medical truth, and it were a monstrous incongruity to combine the refinements of poetic fiction, with the humble and severe account of practical directions. Besides, the years of medical pupillage are not devoted to the framing of beautiful theories, or the performance of such series of experiments as may tend to the development of new and interesting discoveries; the medical student, however diligently he may have applied himself to study, can do little more than lay a foundation of solid principles on which he may erect his future usefulness and fame, and all that can be reasonably expected in his inaugural dissertation is, that he should give sufficient proof that he has remembered what he has heard and read.—

The author of the ensuing pages has nothing new to offer his reader. The greater part of his medical knowledge he owes to

lectures

lectures and to books, and to these he must be indebted for the materials of this essay. He has chosen his subject, not because it presented any peculiar advantages, but because it will answer his purpose as well as any other, and to compensate his reader for the tedium of going over ground with which he must be so well acquainted, the journey shall be rendered as short as possible.—

The object of the following sheets is to give a succinct account of measles.—

Cullen defines this disease to be, a contagious synocha, accompanied by sneezing, a flux of the lachrymal humours, and a hoarse, dry cough. On the fourth day, or a little later, small red specks appear on the body, which hardly rise above its surface, and which at the end of three days go off in bran like scales. This, on the whole is a good definition; what is defective in it will be noticed in the course of our remarks.—

Of this

Irregular measles not
diff. from Scarlet: Angina

Of this affection, as of the greater number of diseases to which the human body is liable, several varieties have been pointed out. To enumerate these were an unnecessary task, as there can be little difficulty in deciding on the treatment proper for each particular case, when the general method of cure is known. Measles has been divided into the regular and irregular forms of the disease, but I believe it will be found that on a careful inspection of the symptoms which are said to characterize irregular measles, there can be little foundation for the opinion that this affection is at all different from the Scarlatina Anginosa.

In treating our subject we shall begin with the general symptoms of Measles, and afterwards distinguish the diagnostic and prognostic signs.

About the eleventh day after having been exposed to the cause of the disease, the patient is attacked by frequent chills, succeeded by heat.

The disease

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The disease according to Professor Barton, is seldom if ever, ushered in by a strong chill. From the beginning the patient is troubled with a dry hoarse cough, and complains of heaviness of the head and eyes. Pains of the loins, flushing of the face, and difficult respiration are almost always attendant, together with a thin discharge from the eyes and nose as in coryza. There is sometimes a discharge of blood from the nose. The patient complains of thirst, and is often affected by nausea, and sometimes vomits. The matter thrown up is generally of a bilious nature. The tongue is usually white and moist. A great disposition to sleep almost always attends the eruptive fever of measles, and delirium not unfrequently. The skin is usually dry, and the pulse quick and tense. The eyes are turned, inflamed and watery.

Towards the end of the second, or beginning of the third day, and here Cullen's definition is defective) the eruption makes its appearance. It usually begins on the face in small red round

and is

which have been compared to flea bites, and extends from thence over the rest of the body. The eruption is thicker in some places than in others forming clusters or blotches. In a day or two the eruptive spots assume a brownish hue, and about the eighth day from the commencement of the complaint generally disappear, leaving a whitish appearance over the body, occasioned by the death of the scarf skin. This last process is termed desquamation; it commonly begins on the face with an itching.

After the appearance of the eruption in very mild cases the febrile symptoms suffer a considerable remission; but in general they pass too not go off till the period of desquamation and if it continues beyond this, as is sometimes the case, the cough seldom fails to keep pace with it. Blood drawn at any period of the disease exhibits the inflammatory crust.

Diagnostic signs. Measles has been confounded with several other complaints, and with none

more more frequently than Scarlatina. It may
in some be distinguished by the following
[illegible] is considered to indicate
in the one disease as in the other, but [illegible] is
always left of a [illegible] Scarlatina than in measles.
In the latter eruption the eruption [illegible] a little
above the surface [illegible]
[illegible] a rash [illegible] would be
[illegible] considered in measles [illegible] as
[illegible] an accident. In Scarlatina [illegible]
[illegible] when the eruption of fluxed [illegible],
[illegible] the author is treating
[illegible] of occurrence. Measles is seldom hopeless, [illegible]
[illegible] generally.

Perhaps the best diagnostic sign [illegible] to the
[illegible] and [illegible] appearance of the tongue,
which is much in common in eruption. Some
in other fevers, will assist in leading to a
correct diagnosis. The coat is heavy and [illegible]
[illegible] and can hardly be mistaken for the coat
[illegible] colored tongue. The appearance of the tongue

tion decides at once the nature of the affection, and as the symptoms which precede it are such as are common to the majority of phlegmasiae diseased, there can be little danger of error in their treatment.

Prognostic signs. The favourable symptoms are a moist skin while the eruption is coming out; copious expectoration after a prolonged; [illegible] which have [illegible] be [illegible] ou[illegible] limited, occurring after a full eruption; an early and free desquamation, leaving the tegument healthy without fever; a mild diarrhoea; a moist skin, and moderate in the decline of the [illegible], and a pulse not very large.

The unfavourable signs are, a pulse very hard and frequent, laborious breathing, a hot, pungent skin, severe pain in the back preceding the eruption, the eruption remaining red longer than usual, or assuming a livid or black colour, the coma and fever remaining after the period of desquamation; the return of coma after the eruption;

Delirium

delirium, spasms of the limbs, profuse sweats, subsultus tendinum.

Of the treatment of Measles. [illegible] a good book [illegible] to relieve the inflammation [illegible] be [illegible] be supposed that our first and most important [illegible] is venesection. great dispute has [illegible] whether it ought to be employed in the [illegible] of the complaint, but experience has proved that it is equally efficacious in all the stages of the disease though it be [illegible] to prove [illegible] if some other [illegible] bleeding must be required till then. We may generally [illegible] in measles as profusely, according to [illegible] Charlotte, as in common inflammation. The state of the pulse and general condition of the patient's constitution will usually give no correct indications of the propriety of employing the lancet.

Cathartics are very important medicines in measles. They should be of the mild and [illegible]

cating kind, strong purges being seldom if ever required. A combination of the salt of tartar and cream of tartar was a favorite purge in this complaint of my preceptor the late Dr Rush. These medicines combined act more powerfully than either separately. Cathartics are useful in Measles by abstracting excitement, particularly from the head where it is very apt to accumulate.

I have in two or three cases seen the best effects result from the application of blisters over the sternum, and Dr Barton remarks that they are as important in Measles as in pneumonia. They are exceedingly useful in allaying irritation in the lungs.

On account of the very inflammatory nature of Measles, the antiphlogistic regimen should be strictly enjoined. The patient's diet ought to consist entirely of mucilages as rice, arrow root, sago &c. Milk has been recommended in this complaint, but as it contains

much

much [illegible] a tendency to inflammation in febrile symptoms, should be avoided by the management; if the weather permit it be of the kind we call direct, so valley water impregnated with some vegetable ~~[illegible]~~ matter, [illegible] water, and should be plentifully taken.

The analogy of measles to the small pox induced practitioners to suppose cold air as useful in the one as in the other disease. The danger which would result from the sudden disappearance of the eruption induces me to say that I should employ cold air a very precarious remedy. The patient, however, should have the advantage of cool air, and with this view, if agreeable to his own feelings, ought not to be confined to bed.

To allay the cough which is a most trouble some symptom in this disease, mullein tea, or a tea made from the flowers of the linden tree which is particularly recommended by

Mr.

the professor of practice in this University, are proper remedies. The safety of employing opium in this purpose has been a matter of speculation & doubt & experience alone shewn it. Blisters after sufficient depletion should come. The medicine in the shape of the bromine preparations are not merely safe but exceedingly advantageous.

Epsom salts generally suit & blisters or cutting the exposure of warm water in spasm, & with ether, the volatile alkali, and wild parsnip, according to the state of the digestive tube are very useful in relieving these symptoms.

The hoarseness which sometimes remains months and years after an attack of Morbillus, has been attempted to be cured by venesection and demulcents, but tonics and stimulants answer this purpose better. Opium given at night is a very effectual remedy for this symptom. Sol: Alk: is a favorite with Dr Bardsley in this hoarseness.

Miscellaneous Remarks.

Measles certainly depends on specific contagion so it affects persons but once in life in general. The disease does not appear in less than six weight days after exposure to the contagion. A certain predisposition seems necessary, according to Dr Gordon, before the disease can be taken, for that gentleman has observed the affection seize three children in the same house and pass by a fourth, who, nevertheless, ~~shall~~ has had ~~have~~ the disease at some future period.

The complaint is most common about the middle of winter, but Dr Barton has known the disease epidemic at all seasons of the year in their city. It is most disposed to affect children, but adults are liable to it.

The disease is most violent in plethoric and scrophulous habits, and is very apt to call into action any scrophulous taint that may be lurking in the system. Measles differs from small

pox

for in not being dangerous to pregnant women.—

Professor Barton observes that children are particularly ~~to~~ liable to cholera infantum during the summer succeeding an attack of measles; and that adults who have had the disease in the spring are more than usual obnoxious to dysentery. He remarks farther that infants before the eruption are sometimes attacked by convulsions, which, however, are not dangerous, and readily yield to cool air, laudanum, and mild aperients.

There is a variety of measles unaccompanied by catarrh, which is important to be remembered because the patient will still be liable to the true disease at some future period.

Dr Home of Edinburg was the first person who attempted to communicate the disease by inoculation; the experiment succeeded,

ceeded, and Dr Home declares that in those persons who received the disease in this way the fever occurred earlier, the symptoms were milder, and no affection of the lungs remained after it. Inoculating for the Measles is now seldom if ever practised. Dr Barton jocosely proposes calling this process rubeolating, which is a term certainly possessing a great deal more meaning than many of the current expressions in the different departments of medicine.—

The preceding remarks contain, I believe, an account of Measles sufficiently accurate to enable a practitioner to distinguish and cure the disease. To say that in this account there are no errors, would be the language of ignorance and presumption; but I may hope that these errors are not of the first magnitude, and will be noticed by the

more

more enlightened reader with that tenderness which the inexperienced student will always be sure of from the candid and liberal professor.

Finis.